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DE RUEHLU #0085 0411603
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY LUANDA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5322
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/COMSIXTHFLT
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHMFIUU/COMUSNAVEUR NAPLES IT

UNCLAS LUANDA 000085

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AO](#)

SUBJECT: GULF OF GUINEA COMMISSION READY FOR US ENGAGEMENT

¶1. Summary: During a February 9 meeting with the Ambassador, newly appointed Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission Miguel Trovoda expressed support for engagement with the US on security cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea. To this end he proposed that the USG work with the commission to identify specific areas for cooperation. Trovoda, past president of Sao Tome and Principe, said the commission is focused on protecting natural resources (especially oil and fish), preventing piracy, and strengthening security cooperation among its member states. In Post's view, Trovoda's expressed desire to work with the US in bolstering Gulf of Guinea security meshes well with the explicit December 2008 Angolan request for USG assistance with maritime security. Post proposes that concerned USG agencies take up Trovoda's offer and explore possibilities for cooperation with the commission on Gulf of Guinea security. An exploratory meeting in Luanda could be a possible first step. End Summary.

¶2. Trovoda described the commission's goal to coordinate actions among member states to manage their common natural endowments including the rainforest, maritime resources, and oil production. He said the commission could ameliorate border conflicts between Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria and Cameroon, and other states. He further stated that an upcoming ministerial conference on defense would address the prevention of piracy.

¶3. Trovoda said the commission welcomes American military expertise and expressed interest in security-related conferences, consultancies, official visits, and other engagement. He was interested in the Automatic Identification System (AIS), a maritime tracking system supported by the USG, and said that he would distribute any information that we might provide to the commission member states (Note: Post will give the commission information on AIS, a system that we have already introduced to the Angolans. End note.) On other areas of possible engagement, Trovoda said a principal constraint affecting the commission is communication since the eight member states speak four different languages. He opined that Portuguese and English would evolve into the commission's working languages. He inquired as to whether the USG could play a role in teaching English to commission members (Note: Post will assess whether US training for the Angolan military could be extended to include staff from the commission. End note.)

¶4. Comment: Trovoda's heart is in the right place in trying to design a meaningful program to effect his mandate, i.e. increased security in the Gulf of Guinea. His stature as a respected former head of state with strengthen his hand. In Post's view, Trovoda expressed desire to work with the US in bolstering Gulf of Guinea security meshes well with the explicit December 2008 Angolan request for USG assistance with maritime security. Post proposes that concerned USG agencies take up Trovoda's offer and explore possibilities for cooperation with the commission on Gulf of Guinea

security. An exploratory meeting in Luanda could be a possible first step. End Comment.
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